

A  
SERMON  
Preach'd before the  
HONOURABLE  
House of Commons,  
A T  
St. MARGARET's WESTMINSTER,  
January the 30th, 1696.

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By GREGORY HASCARD, D. D. Dean of *Wind-  
for*, Rector of *St. Clements Danes*, and Chaplain in  
Ordinary to His Majesty.

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M I C A H. VII. 2.

*The good man is perished out of the earth,  
and there is none upright among men: they  
all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every  
man his neighbour with a net.*



These words are the cause of the  
Prophet's sorrow, express ver. 1.  
so deep a concern it was, that the  
words (*Wo is me*) may signify  
not only mourning, but howling;  
which did not arise from a melancholy temper,  
or discontent against the Government, disappoint-  
ments, peevishness, or contradiction, but from a  
serious and sad consideration of the scarcity of

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men truly good : So rare they were in the Land of *Palestine*, as not to be found in Clusters, in numerous Families, and large Societies, but in thin and hungry Gleanings after the Vintage was over, v. 1. When the Prophet had taken an impartial view of the several Ranks and Orders in the *Jewish* Nation, the Princes, Priests and People, good men, were reckon'd up ; not like the musters in St. *John* of the Tribe of *Judah* twelve thousand, or silver in the days of *Solomon*, but as hard to be found as the mouths of *Nile*, or Jewels among dirt and rubbish. Notwithstanding the Law and Temple, which they profest and admir'd, the mighty wonders that were done of old, and they believ'd, the peculiar care and tenderness of Divine Providence over the *Jewish* Nation ; saith God, *I have carried them upon Eagles wings* ; Signal Judgments upon men of Vice, the Admonitions and Alarms of the Prophets, and other kind methods inviting to Goodness and true Religion, yet they were so degenerate and vicious, that when the Prophet came to search for the fruits of Religion, and find a number of good men, he makes this sad return, *The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men* ; they all lie in wait for blood, &c. Such a passion as this for the want of good men, became the Prophet in all capacities, as a Man, as a Subject, and as a Prophet. As a Man, whose

whose essence is as much to be good and religious, as 'tis to be rational ; and therefore could not but be concern'd, to see a Nation of men so strangely chang'd and degenerated by Vice and Luxury into Brutes, that nothing was left of the Image of God and Manhood, beside shape and laughter. As a Subject, well foreseeing, and with grief considering, what misery would suddenly betide the Nation, for want of Goodness and Religion. As a Prophet, that notwithstanding the Messages he brought from God, and the clear Predictions he made them, what sad Events in a short time would happen to them, for want of Goodness and Repentance, yet they slighted his Errand, and were sturdy and resolute in their Vices.

I am afraid we have too great reason from the consideration of this day, for the Prophet's Sorrow and Exclamation. When a truly good and most excellent Prince fell by the bloody hands of his Rebellious Subjects, and with him our Laws and Liberties, our Apostolical Church, and Ancient Government, and great was the fall thereof; to the Grief of our Friends, the Joy of our Enemies, and the Scandal of Religion. A Murder it was of the deepest Die, committed upon a most tender Father, by Sons making high Pretences to the Spirit of God, Zeal for Christianity, the Publick Good, to Purity and Reformation array'd in the

the finest Dress and Colours, yet deeply stain'd by this foul Action, to the Triumph of Rome, the Laughter of the Atheist, the Sport of the Vicious and Lewd, but to the Sorrow of all Loyal and Good Subjects, all Honest and Sincere Christians: To spend time in magnifying the Virtues and Sufferings of our Martyr'd Sovereign, which were so bright, and known so well, outshining the Jewels of his Crown, would be gross Impertinency to this great Auditory; they speak aloud like Abel's blood, though their great Master is dead, not for Vengeance, but Imitation. I shall therefore only touch upon them, as they fall in with the *end and intention of these words*, *The good man is perished out of the earth*; and my following Discourse upon them very suitable, I hope, to the Devotion of this day, which I shall pursue by this method.

(1.) Let us consider wherein the goodness of this good man, the Prophet mentions, did express it self.

(2.) What prevail'd or grew up in the Prophet's time, in the place of true Religion and Goodness.

(3.) What particular Considerations may move us to bewail the want of true Goodness.

It could be wish'd that this dearth of Goodness had been only under the Jewish Religion, and peculiar only to the Land of Palestine; but the Christian Church, as well as the Prophet, may justly bewail

bewail her barren Christians, and the scarcity of Men truly good, notwithstanding her Laws so Excellent, so Divine. We all affirm indeed, That our Religion by the hand of Jesus came from God, but our Conversation saith, 'tis only a new device and fashion to wear abroad, and throw off at home. With great solemnity of Words and Looks we repeat our Creeds; with confidence and a keen Passion we break the Commands. We pray and communicate with Sighs and Appearances, befitting the strictest Penitent, and the greatest Saint; yet our Lives say, our Prayers are but formal Orations unto God, and the Table of the Lord is common. We flame with Zeal for Religion, but our practice puts out the Fire, and in the bottom of the Ashes lie Revenge and Interest, Faction and a Party, which with a little breath blowing off the disguise, appear in their natural Colours. We call our selves Saints and Elect, but where's the Patience, the Temper, and the Spirit of them? We follow Jesus and wear his Livery, but underneath is the Passion of a *Indus*, and the fond and carnal Expectation of a *Jew*; and is this the Coat of thy Son *Joseph*? Some there were, who murther'd their Sovereign, yet talkt loud, and disputed warmly, and cast themselves into Sides and Divisions, and all must be set at Stake for the Cause of God, by which they drive on their barbarous Design; but

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yet I am afraid, and could wish the Fear was idle, for the sake of Christianity. What was the black Charge of Pagan Corinth, may in the greatest part be laid against them, who were adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, revilers, extortioners, 1 Cor. 6.9, 10, 11. And I wish I could say such were only some of them, but they are washed, but they are sanctified; but the same Vices, or others, in so many still do live and thrive, maintaining their old lewd Principles, as tho they endeavour'd to fulfil the Prophecy, telling us what should betide Christianity in the latter days, *That men should be lovers of themselves, proud, boasters, traytors, unthankful, false accusers, and a strange rabble of sinners are reckon'd up, having the form of godliness, but denying the power of it,* 2 Tim. 3. 2, 3, 4. but what availeth all that form, so long as Mordecai the Jew lives? what signifies a good Religion in a bad Man's breast? But I am not here, besure, to libel Christianity, or any of its Disciples, who are truly Penitent; 'tis a great part of that Religion to be Charitable, and cover Errors. But thus much I may venture to say, let our Religion be never so Primitive and Apostolical, let it be English or Italian, Reform'd or Popish, except it makes us really good, 'tis but wrangling Hypocrisy and Noise, not being serviceable to the great Design, the saving of our Souls. That we may not therefore again be deceiv'd by Names and Pretences, 'twill be prudent

prudent to consider, wherein true Goodness doth consist; and omitting other particulars, I shall insist upon only these four, for which our Martyr was very Eminent, and the Authors of this Murder were so notoriously guilty of the contrary Vices.

(1.) True Goodness doth express it self in plainness and sincerity in all our respective Dealings with Men. When the Primitive Christian did advise, or treat, answer or determine, he did it with uprightness or simplicity, being mindful of his Master's command, bidding him be as gentle and harmless as a Dove, and allowed him the prudence, but not the false and speckled Skin of the Serpent to conceal his Sting and Poyson. But the Modern Christian leaving his King and Master's Highway of Truth and Plainness, and leaping common Bounds of Truth and Justice, by windings, and turnings, and indirect Courses, thinks to arrive at his Journeys end. Ask him counsel, he directs to your Temper and Inclination to scratch and please; and tells you your House is strong, when 'tis on fire about your ears. If you deal and contract with him, plain Sense is wrackt, words are perverted, and Shrugs, Looks, Silence, Postures and Signs, must all carry on his Intrigue and End; and Lying, and Hypocrisy, Equivocation, and Reserves, and perjury at a pinch, must be sanctified to the same purpose, and you treat with an Ap-

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partition, one that is not what he seems to appear; Falshood he calls Prudence, Treachery is good management, his own Contrivance is Discovery, and Trains and Schemes of Tricks and Frauds are good Foresight and excellent Judgment; this is to lie in wait, to hunt, spread nets with all fly Arts of deceit and fraud, to catch the simple and plain. And had its Apostles and early Christians, either in their civil Conversation, or in their Propagation of their Religion been insincere and false, it had been confin'd to a narrower compass than now it is, and they whipt for Vagrants, and markt for Cheats and Impostors. Such are but the little Spirits, and low Souls, who wanting solid Judgment, and true Prudence, which are generous and brave, fly to Tricks and Falshood like other small Animals, because weak, Nature hath supply'd with craft. As tho God had so order'd all Humane Affairs, that our just Interests could not be carried on by the Rules of Honesty, Plainness, and Uprightness, except we call in Deceit and Fraud to our assistance. 'Tis only fit for a bad Cause to be managed by suitable methods, which as often miss the desired end as attain it, it being as easy to discover and countermine, as to contrive the Design, which often concludes in Scorn and Disappointment, all not being Fools, as the man of Tricks intends they should be. This Temper is most

most destructive to the ease and quiet of Humane Societies, which will always be in fits of Jealousies and Suspicions, having been so often trick'd, they are afraid they embrace a shadow, or anchor upon Quicksands; and whereas before they were credulous and believ'd every thing, they now believe nothing; Words have lost their use, Oaths are made common Air; we know not when our business is at an end; Niceties are infinite, there are still some fly Quirks, Fetches, and Distinctions behind, which melt the Glew and Cement of Conversation, and the sacred Bonds of Friendship. Frauds and Flatteries spring from fear and a servile temper, and many times end ingloriously. The Punick Faith is more a Brand, than Valour, the Renown of that Ancient Nation. And poor Regulus's Honesty carries more Fame with it than Cæsar's Consulship. And many times the Doom of an Achitophel, and Herod that Fox, and other Men of tricks, hath been very severe. Like Boniface the 8th, who came in like a Fox, rul'd like a Lyon, and dy'd like a Dog. Yet, notwithstanding all this, since our Martyr is perished, may we not justly complain, it becoming this mournful Day, that Faith and Truth are departed from Men? May we not suspect when our great Master comes again, whether, in this sense, he will find Faith and Uprightness on Earth? I wish King David's times

times be not our own, if they be, I am sure we ought to use his Prayer, Psal. 12. 1, 2. **H**elp, Lord, for the good man ceaseth; and the faithful fail from among the children of men.

(2.) Goodness expresseth it self in the exercise of good Nature, and Charitable Allowances for the Errors of others. Such is the State and Condition of the Christian World, that her publick Societies and private Persons, her Saints in some degree as well as common Mortals, may be guilty sometimes of a wilful Offence, often of Frailties, Errors, Surprizes, and Miscarriages. The good Man, like his gentle Master, knowing the sad Circumstances of Humane Life, our Mold, Frame, and Company, sometimes conceals, always judges candidly, interprets fairly, and by soft and easy Methods endeavours a cure. The Man of censure, of greater Vices, and more ill Nature, spreads and inflames, wrests and aggravates, and pours in Vinegar instead of Oyl to make the Wound easily curable, desperate and mortal, and advances himself upon the dead Body. Such Men do not heartily mourn for the want of Virtue and Religion, but are inwardly pleased that there are mistakes and errors in the World, which afford them the pleasure of Murmuring and Complaining; and like Belzebub, that Prince of Flies, delight in, and feasts upon Wounds and Sores; and are made serviceable to their

their Hypocrisy, and Steps to their Interest and Ambition. Disorders and Abuses which might have been redrest by gentle Treatments and moderate Prosecutions, turn into Confusion and Ruin by utmost Rigors and Severities; which makes Men desperate, and that makes them formidable, and sometimes prevailing; as the Justice and Peace, Laws and Liberties, might not be secur'd but by Extremity and Cruelty. The good Man knows how to reform, but not to extirpate; to pardon Crimes that are past, yet to prevent them in time to come; who is just in the use of Law and Right, but not severe and vexatious; and like that God above, who by Mercy and Reprieves preserves the Reputation of his Justice, and governs the sturdy World as well as by utter Destructions and Executions. And when Men are stiled Just in Holy Writ, as *Noah*, and *Joseph*, *Cornelius*, and Christ himself; their Justice did not consist only in doing no wrong, and in keeping closer to the Law, but in Abatement and Remission of Rights and Liberties, in Goodness, Charity, Clemency, and Humanity. And as they were ready to cover and pardon faults, so never quick and passionate to upbraid; and therefore we never read when the misunderstanding was between the two Saints, *Peter* and *Paul*, that the one reminded the other of his former Persecution of the Church,

or St. Paul upbraided St. Peter of his denying of his Master ; or either of them *Mary Magdalen* with her former Unchastity ; 'twas sufficient to them their Repentance was sincere. But the Authors of this Bloody Day would give no allowance for the few and small Errors in their Prince, in the hard Circumstances of his Life and Government, but like that accursed *Cain*, took pleasure to discovet the Nakedness of a most tender Father of his Country, yet granted large Patents to themselves to Sin securely by, and made his Concessions for Peace sake, Confessions of his Mistakes, and those they made unpardonable. Men that pretend most to Perfection and Infallibility, are many times guilty of as gross Mistakes and Follies as others, and evermore ill-natur'd, as great a fault as any. The good Man makes the best Ruler, Subject, Neighbour, and Friend, and hath most of the Spirit of God, and the Temper of Jesus in him. And if all the World was wanting of this Goodness, the Earth would be but Confusion and a Slaughter-house. Such are the Errors of all Mankind, necessarily calling for Favour and Charity ; yet notwithstanding the ease of Mankind depends on this good Temper, and 'tis a principal Branch of our Religion : The concern of the Prophet may be justly our own, *That the righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are*

are taken away ; 'twas then a Calamity, *Isa. 57. 1.* and the Language of the *Psalmt* may fit the Christian, *There is none that doeth good, no, not one* ; but adding to the heap of common Sins, and then exclaiming against them.

(3.) The good Man is of a Spirit truly publick, whose happiness is not only to hug himself, and to be well at home ; but his Care and Affection looks abroad ; and his King and Country, his Relatives and Neighbours, are his common concern, who being plac'd in those Communities and Bodies, like a compassionate Member, is sick when the Head doth ache ; is exposed to danger, when it is unsecure ; who mourns and is poor ; who is weak and cast down, when his common Parent or Fellow-being is distrest and languisheth ; who is diligent and active to preserve the Fame, to allay the Fears, to prevent the Dangers of a Kingdom, to reconcile Divisions and Parties in it, making its Greatness and Safety his own : *Cæsar* and his Fortunes embark'd together in one common Bottom. This is not only the good Man's Interest and Safety, and therefore is as prudent as he is good, but 'tis his Fame and Reputation to be brave and generous ; for this gave the Characters of Renown and Greatness to the Men of Ancient Times, who easily sacrificed their Pleasures and Fortunes, when they came in Competition with the Publick

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Good; who had none of thōse stingy and mean Principles, to turn Church and State into a Flame to warm their Hands, or gratify Revenge; who had none of thōse low and little Spirits, only to weather the Storm for their own Lives, and that Peace might be only in their days, tho their ease and softness (like great Calms portending Storms and Thunder) brought heavier Calamities upon Posterity, and the Entail was not to be cut off. They did not think the World, and all its good things were created solely upon their account, and were to centre in their little selves, or that they and the World were to dye together. Let the Wind blow, and let the Ship of Government strike upon a Rock, yet they have provided a private Plank to swim to Shore. *Esther's* Beauty will keep her safe in *Abasuerus's* Court, and she need not put her self upon that hazard for the sake of her Nation, if *I perish, I perish*; nor idly wish she had been born in some other Age, when she could have been more securely kind unto her Country; but probably thought she was born for such a time as this. And *Daniel* might have thought that his Gift of unfolding Dreams and Visions, might have made him great and safe, and he need not run the venture for his Religion, of the Lyon's Den. These men scorn'd Ease and Danger, Interest and Pleasure, to serve their Generation, and King, and Country,

Country, Laws and Religion, without making them terms of Division and Peevishness, were Father and Mother, Sister and Brother, and their dear Selves too. These things indeed are written for our Example, upon whom the ends of the World are come; but alas, the Apostle tells us, Men should then be *lovers of themselves*. There are not now so many *Jehu's* left, *Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts*; except we call Pride and Ambition two mighty Virtues. And where is the *Lot* now, that is vex'd with the unclean Conversation of the wicked? The *Psalmist* is long since dead, and few eyes like his *gush out with tears, because men keep not his Laws*. Disobedience to them, and Vice, being counted only natural Freedoms and lawful Liberties. Poor *Uriah* is slain, and will not rise again in this Age; the *Ark*, and *Israel*, and *Judah*, abide in Tents, and shall I go down to my House to eat and drink? And 'tis the Scandal of Religion, that having so good a Master, who went about doing good, and made the benefit of Mankind, who so little deserv'd it, his proper Business; that there should be so many Workers of Iniquity found among his Disciples. Had this narrow Principle govern'd our *Martyr*, he had reign'd longer, and gone later to Heaven; or had it prevail'd in our Forefathers, who planted and toil'd for their *Posterity, Hospitals and Publick Buildings*,

ings, Arts and useful Employment, had been as rare as good Men ; and the present Age would have had less Plenty and more Labour, and expos'd like the *Ostrich's Egg* ; and instead of Statues and Monuments erected to them, they would have had Anger and Reproach, and all Generations should have call'd them Evil.

(4.) The good Man takes up Religion only to serve a spiritual Purpose. He looks into the other World, and firmly concludes, doubtless there is a God, doubtless there is a Reward for the Righteous ; he reflects upon himself in this, and finds, he is not yet fitted and pre-qualify'd for that Divine State ; he therefore enters into Religion to serve these two mighty ends ; every day to confirm his Faith about the Being of God, the Immortality of the Soul, the day of Account and Retribution, to believe whatever Christ hath promis'd or discover'd ; and certainly thinks these things in Religion are very true. This Persuasion makes him depending upon, and resign to God ; quiets his Actions, expels his Fears, supports his Hopes, makes him more humble and charitable, just and true ; keeps him in a continual Sense and Reverence of God, and in universal Love with all Mankind. This is truly a good Man, whose Religion is pure and undefil'd, and carries a respect only to another World. All other Religion without this  
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good Purpose, is only Fashion or Faction, Hypocrisy and Formality, Superstition or Interest, whereby he honours and serves only himself, but disgraces his God. Such Men have made Religion, this or that, so various, that you may as well define the thing that Men call Wit, as what Religion means. Sometimes 'tis Temper, changeable by Weather and Company; sometimes 'tis Discontent arising from Disappointment of one Party, and now the Man is resolv'd to strike in with another; sometimes 'tis Design; and Creed, Sacraments, and Prayers, are good Engins and Trains to gain it. As tho the Son of God came with all the greatness of his Miracles, and suffer'd all those Sorrows and Indignities upon Earth, only to set up a new Model of Government, to erect some new Schemes of Trade; and the great Contention should be, whether the Monopoly of it should be at *Rome*; or elsewhere; and in the modern Phrase, a rich and a thriving Man should be call'd a good Man. For Religion without real Goodness, is Scene and Pageantry, Noise and Humour, and any thing but what it pretends to be. Without plain Obedience to the Laws of God and Reformation of Manners, Religion is but Flattery and Bribes for Divine Justice. To seem to be Religious, and not to bridle our Tongues; to pretend to Faith, and shew no good Works;

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to boast of the Spirit of Christ, without his Temper, the Love of God, without Duty and Submission; and to be a Christian, and yet without Virtue, is a Contradiction, and in effect is to be called Good without Goodness, or Christians without Christianity. For if you look to the Laws and Design of Christ, his Example and Miracles in Confirmation of it, the whole Constitution and Frame of his Religion, you will find it only this, to make Men better here, and to save them hereafter; and so essential to Christianity, that you may as soon call a Man, a Man, without Spirit or Soul; or the Hypocrites Trumpet, a Victory, as men Religious without Honesty and Goodness; and Prayers and Sacraments, Temples and Altars, and all the Externals of Religion, Minister unto that great Design; and the discovery of Christ, call'd our Creeds, are not to tell us fine Notions and Curiosities about God and that other State, but to influence our Lives, and give us good Hopes of Heaven. Here our Religion Centers, and this alone will do us good. To hear Men talk loudly, and dispute angrily about Religion, and yet want Goodness, is equal to the folly of quarrelling about the Possessions of the Moon; they worship, and are warm about they know not what; something that will not belong to them; to fight for that which they intend never to use, that

that is to say, to correct their Follies and Lewdness; 'tis to expose their Quiet and Lives for Rid- dles, and the unknown Land. And without this great end, Men may as well lay aside the Profes- sion of it, and give themselves, and the World- less Trouble, and there would be less Censures and Rigors in the World. For let us deal im- partially with our selves, and others, Who were the Causes of this Bloody Fact, and yet most un- justly charg'd Popery upon our Martyr; Whose is the best Religion? his, who fetcheth a Dispen- sation for his Vice from *Rome*? Or his, who gives himself a License to Sin? His, who condemns the Half Communion? Or he that never receives at all, except it be for an Office or a Vote. His, who believes the Pains of Purgatory? Or his, who laughs at that Doctrine, yet lives as tho' there was neither Purgatory nor Hell, but painted Fires in both. The Consistory is not more Holy than the Conclave, if the same Vices be in both; there is little difference between him that shall take away one of the commands, and him that shall constantly break another. The Doctrines of the Church of *Rome* naturally lead to Vice, the worst Religion in the Christian World, be- cause they do so; and the Constitution of our own directly leads to Virtue, one of the best Notes to know the best Church by. Yet if our Lives be equally,

equally wicked, 'tis no great matter who is in the purest Church. 'Tis fit that the best constituted Church in the whole World, such is this of the Church of *England*, should have the best Men in it; and all its Members may be so if they please, and seek for no other, but gracing it with works of Goodness and Discipline, are themselves an honest and upright Conversation. This is the good Man we want so much, this is the *Israelite* indeed, in whom is no guile. This is a true Disciple of Christ, and such that are so minded, there will be Peace upon them, and the whole *Israel* of God.

(2.) What grew up and prevail'd in the Prophet's time, in the place of true Religion or Goodness.

(1.) Superstition and false Religion, which naturally produces trouble and disquiet in all Governments. Worthy Conceptions of God and Christ, and Obedience to his plain Laws, are so far from clashing with Authority, that they give it greater strength and value; Obedience in such a Religion being a mighty Duty. But Superstition, which entertains such course Notions of God, making him False and Cruel, Peevish and Humoursome, Sowre and Uncertain; makes its Disciples of the same Temper, thinking it excellent Religion to imitate such a God, which must necessarily

cessarily disturb Societies, and be troublesome to all Mankind. What strange Subjects, Neighbours, and Friends must those be, who are always sullen and melancholy, fearful and discontented; these cannot but weaken and allay the pleasure and safety of Neighbourhoods and Communities? Let us draw the black Catalogue of all the Cruelties and Butcheries, Confusions and Ruins, that have betided the World, and you shall find most of them owing their Original to Superstition or false Religion; it being the nature of these two, to call Humour and Flesh, Interest or Fashion, Design or Education, Cloudy-days and Ambition, and the like, the working of the Spirit, the Church of God, Decrees of Heaven, Christian Liberty, Fundamentals of Religion, and Conditions of Salvation. And if they fancy these to be oppos'd and totter, Violence and Fraud, Blood and Disorder, must all club together for their Support and Reputation. Superstition and blind Zeal, like *Aneas* with his Father and his false gods upon his Back; and *Sampson* with his Eyes put out, will pass through Flames, and pull the Government about their Ears, and make a Common Grave for themselves and Enemies. And all the dear Relations of Prince and Subjects, Friends and Allies, (which tye Mankind together) have been snapt in funder, when

Superstition hath been in its raving fits and freaks ; witness the Valley of *Hinnom*, the *Romish* Massacres , and this mournful Day. The Prophet had reason to cry out, *Wo is me*, when he saw Religion dwindle into Superstition, and no real Goodness left. He could not but foresee how this would affect the civil Part of *Jerusalem* ; and when the Temple was made a den of Thieves instead of *Israelites* indeed, there would be violence and complaining in the Street ; so necessary a Connexion there is between Peace and true Religion, and Disorders and Superstition. For when once true Religion is harr'd and frightened out of its Wits, it grows giddy and foams, is quarrelsome and clamorous, and calls every thing Christianity, but what really is so, Faith upon God, and UniversalCharity. These two Essential Parts, the Soul and Body of Religion, make Men meek and peaceable, good-natur'd and obliging, which are fruits of the Spirit, and the great Pleasure and Security of Kingdoms and Conversation. And whereas Christianity is first pure, and then peaceable ; Superstition, which wears its Colours, is earthly and vexatious, made up of whimsy and vapour, is contentious and fierce, implacable and revengeful, enough to make the compassionate Prophet use this Exclamation, when true Goodness was gone out of the World, and only Superstition left, *Wo is me*.

(2.) Wicked Lives in the Professors of the true Religion, which will certainly cause Misery and Ruin in a Nation, which so comes to pass, not only by Divine Decrees passing Sentence upon a wicked and profligate People, but from the natural tendency of Vice, which is as much the direct Cause of Misery, as Poyson is of Death. We curiously inquire and ask the question, why the Strength and Reputation, the Riches and Courage of a Nation are gone ? And we ascribe it either to the hand of Providence, determining the Fates and Periods of Kingdoms,

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the Influences of the Heavens, or such more secret Causes ; or we answer as our present Fancy, Peevishness, or Fation do suggest ; but forget the nature of Vice and Wickedness, which do as fatally destroy, as the Devil and the Stars, the Sword and Enemy, all in Conjunction. Secret Fires and a raging Pestilence, the Blasts of Heaven, and unexpected Defeats, are many times sent by the invisible Hand of Providence, by the just Provocation of our Follies ; yet as ill Effects as they, are conceiv'd in the natural Womb of Vice. The genuine Issue of Pride and Lust, Ambition and Revenge, Idleness and Injustice, and other Vices, are so deform'd and monstrous, that they would create an horror to describe and view them. From whence come Wars, but from your Lusts ? St. James doth hint to us to ask the question a little further, From whence generally come Poverty and Contempt, weak Bodies and weaker Heads, Divisions and Treacheries, Cowardise and Meanness, and other sad effects, but from the Spawn of Vice, it robbing Subjects of that just Temper and Qualification, which alone make a Kingdom to flourish. And if we look back upon the Calamities of all Ages past, the Miseries and Troubles that now vex the present, you will find the chief Spring and Original, to be prophanie and vicious Living. Real Goodness and Religion being Prudence and true Policy, Strength and Courage, and every thing that gives Lulture and Security to a Nation. And when the Wise and Ingenious have drawn their Schemes and Projects for advance of Trade and Power, the Honour and Interest of a Nation, they always suppos'd Virtue and Religion to be the first step ; otherwise they began at the wrong end. And what can we expect from the Justice of God, (if we be real Christians, as we pretend to be) but that if we prophanie his Temple, he will blast our Vineyards. And it hath been look'd upon by all wise and good Men, as sure a sign,

as a Voice in the Jewish Temple, *Let us be gone*; and more certain than a blazing Comet, or a monstrous Birth, that the ruins of Kingdoms and Families then drew on, when Religion by ill living was contemn'd, and no real Goodness left. And therefore when the Historian describes the Causes of the Destruction of our Ancient Britains, he tells us, They were Proud and Luxurious, haters of a plain Truth, and lovers of an handsome Lye, and indifferently concern'd for what pleased or displeased God; and then concludes, *Non igitur mirandum est tales degeneres patriam suam à mittere quam predicto modo maculabant.* 'Tis no wonder that such degenerate Britains, who had nothing of their brave Ancestors in them, but their Name, should lose that Country which they defil'd in such a manner, and now spued them out. Our Prophet therefore seeing Vice to thrive, and grow fashioable; and some Sins to be esteemed good Breeding and Education, 'tis no wonder he cries out, *Woe is me*, as tho from his Tower he saw Armies and the Plague, Wild Beasts and Inundations to invade and destroy the Land. So dismal are the fruits of Vice, or want of real Goodness.

(*Lastly,*) Atheistical Persuasions prevail'd, or there was no Religion at all. As Vice naturally leads to Atheism, and Superstition often concludes in it, so Atheism is very kind to Vice again, and often ends in Superstition; such dear Relations are these three to one another; and such a circle do men make when once they are giddy, and out of the way of this substantial Religion. And what greater Calamity can betide Mankind than a contempt of Providence, and that folly, to imagine that there is not a Being we call a God; but that all things tumble up and down in great uncertainty and darkness; and the thing we worship is only a Creature of Fear and Custom, Policy or Fiction: Government and Friendship, Relations and

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Trust, and other great things which make Mankind happy, have lost their vital Spirits, because Reverence of a God, checks of Conscience, and the hopes and fears of Rewards and Punishments in the other World are gone. And publick Laws are too scanty to recompence the los of real Goodnes and Religion; and Fame and Honour to keep Men in due Bounds, will prove but airy things, when respect to God and Virtue is laid aside. The Man of Revenge may assassinate his Neighbour, if it can be but a work of darknes, with security; and may defraud and cozen, if by Privacy and Art he can keep his Fame and Reputation; he fears no Punishment in the other World for all this Villany, and 'tis his safe Interest and Pleasure in this. 'Tis the Imperfection of Humane Societies in making Laws not to be able to reach many private Sins, and such is the skill of men to baffle the plainest Laws; if there was not the dread of an higher Hand, Laws would lose their Edge, and Mankind would be in a state of War. For tho the force of Religion doth not prevail upon every Man, yet it doth upon many; upon most in some degree, and is apt and fit to gain upon all. And therefore Men of Contrivance and Policy, if themselves had no real Persuasion of Religion, yet ever thought it necessary to infuse the belief of it into those they had to manage; supposing that all other Methods to rule the World, were only Formalities and Entreaties. And tis plain, what they acted upon the account of State-craft, is really so. A Land without Religion, is a World without a Sun, producing Horror and Confusion, and the Prophets Wo. And the belief of a God without real Goodnes, is to say, there is no God at all.

(3.) What particular Reasons may move us to bewail the want of real Goodnes.

(1.) The want of it is the principal Cause of our Distractions about Religion. Men of Wisdom and Sobriety cannot

cannot but be pleas'd to have the methods of Salvation plain, and the Characters easy, whereby they may judge, whether they shall be saved or no; but it sometimes happens that good Men live and walk, where different ways are chalk'd out, and several Voices are heard to say, *Lo here, and lo there lies the road to Jerusalem*; their Opinions are numerous, their Arguings warm, their Censures severe, every one pretending Heaven and true Religion is only with them. How must the good Man carry himself here, when his Birth, Privacy, Imployment, and other Circumstances of Life will not permit him to consider and conclude, who hath the greatest truth on his side. The only Ground among these Quicksands, Waves, and Winds, variety of Opinions as ill as they, to anchor on, is real Goodness. This being the best evidence that our Faith is true, our Spirit Divine, Decrees irreversible, the great preparative to Heaven, to which all other parts in Religion do minister, in which most Persuasions (tho sometimes they mistake the means to it) do agree, most suitable to natural Reason; the design of Christ's coming, and the solemn end of all Religion. If this good Man mistakes, yet so long as his Error toucheth not upon the great Article of Faith, nor Goodness, he hath a merciful High-Priest at God's right hand, who will accept his Sacrifice, and pardon the blemish of it. He is safe and secure, and is an *Israelite* indeed, tho he hath not the Phylacteries and Fringes of a nicer Rabbi; tho he cannot call over all the Points of the Compas, and understand all the Sailer's terms, yet he is in the Channel to *Sion*, not having made Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience. And tho this Church of *England*, which our Martyr so heartily defended with his Pen and his Blood, be charg'd by some with Heresy, and others with Superstition and Secular Interest, yet being sure that her Faith is Primitive, her Discipline, Ceremonies, Collects,

lects, Homilies, and whole Constitution, are model'd for, and directly lead to a good Conversation, we may fix in her, and not grow giddy by turning round in all Religions. Nothing giving more satisfaction to the Mind in a divided Age, that we shall not miscarry in our hopes of Heaven, than when our purposes in Religion are honest, to make us better Men than the common Lump and Mass of Mankind; that we are now designing only to be good, and to have our Conversation as becomes the Gospel of Christ.

(2) Real Goodness is the best way to unite us among our selves. Religion upon any other account than the hopes of Heaven above, and real Goodness below, is changeable; being only Fashion, Interest, or Humour, which will dwindle into as many Divisions as there are in the World. Religion that aims not at Goodness, is nice and clamorous, worldly and uncertain, which naturally produce Factions and Dif- fensions. Religion or Wisdom from above is gentle and easy to be entreated, plain and substantial, which easily beget Unity and Charity, great parts of Christianity, and as great Blessings of Mankind. Real Goodness purges our Judgment, removes our Prejudices; then we easily discern what is Notion, and Opinion, and Speculation, and what is solid and practical Truth; what is probable, and what is plain, what may be parted with for peace-sake, and what is to be retain'd; what is Soul and Heaven, and what is Flesh and Blood. The great occasion of Differences that have vexed the Christian World, and been its Scandal, hath sprung from the Ambition and Peevishness, idle Disputes, Contests of Power and Gain. For tho' most in their religious Heats pretend Faith and Goodness, and entitle other things with those excellent Natures, yet they confute themselves in the Prosecution of them, being guilty of Cruelty, Hypocrisy, and Falshood, things directly contrary to the Christian Faith.

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They kill Jesus, to save Christ; disgrace Religion, in so maintaining of it. And would Men be in earnest in this pretence, the great Contentions would draw to an end. For let us but leave things controverted and dark to the Schools; for Discipline, Order, and things of indifference submit to the Wisdom of our Governors; and let not Factories and Changes mix with our Churches, and call Interest Christianity, and strip our selves of Passion and hopes of Victory; there would be only left Faith and a good Life, necessary to Salvation; such as Christ and his Apostles taught, the Primitive Christians practised, and were saved by, plain and manifest to all. And then the only Contention would be Honest and truly Christian, who should be the best Men; and some mens Zeal would therefore cool, the flaming Bigot not always having this good design, to receive the Kingdom of God as a little Child, in simplicity and goodness to grow thereby. It being easy to observe, that an Age full of Contention about Religion was not always the best; and when the Church, as in the first Three hundred years was truly good, it had most Unity within its Pale. Vice directly stirring up Wars and Feuds, and Virtue Peace and Love; and to reform mens Lives, is the best method to bring them into truth; and if our Conversation be in Heaven, we shall be exercising and singing *Peace on Earth, Duty to our King, Good will to all men*; the short and easy Method to bring us to the place where the Soul of our Blessed Martyr dwells, that with him, and the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, we may sing *Praises and Hallelujahs to the Lamb, and him that sits upon the Throne, blessed for evermore.* Amen.

F I N I S H.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

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